

El Heitmann

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EDUCATION

2026 - 2028	Concordia University Master of Arts in Media Studies
2021 - 2025	DigiPen Institute of Technology Bachelor of Arts in Game Design, Minor in Psychology GPA: 3.63; Cum Laude

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Media Studies; Communications; Game Studies; Cultural Studies; Queer Theory; Disability Studies; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Affect Theory

EMPLOYMENT (academic)

Spring 2025	Teaching Assistant: Identities at Play <i>DigiPen Institute of Technology</i> - Mentored 22 students on topics of identity, culture, and structural inequality within digital media, covering texts, industry, fandom, and academia. - Proofread, copyedited, typeset, and provided actionable feedback for 30+ media studies research papers.
Fall 2023; Fall 2024	Teaching Assistant: Narrative Design <i>DigiPen Institute of Technology</i> - Mentored 149 students on game narrative design methods. - Organized weekly workshops, created lecture material, and issued writing feedback to aid students submitting papers to the Game Developers Conference's international narrative review competition, 4 of whom won. - Graded and provided detailed feedback in terms of content and mechanics for 100+ writing assignments.

AWARDS AND HONORS

2023	Platinum Award Game Narrative Review Competition <i>Game Developers Conference</i> - Authored an analysis paper on <i>Xenoblade Chronicles</i>. - Gave a conference presentation at GDC 2023.
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Spring 2025	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology
Fall 2024	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology
Spring 2024	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology
Spring 2023	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology
Spring 2022	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology

PROJECTS

Spring 2025	Structured Unmasking: How RPGs Support Autistic Identities Independent Study Research Project <i>DigiPen Institute of Technology</i> - Constructed the syllabus for an independent media studies course under the supervision of Professor Joshua D. Savage. - Authored a game studies research paper examining games as a space for autistic unmasking. - Integrated 80+ academic sources across neuroqueer theory, game studies, communications, and disability studies. - Received acceptance for peer review from the <i>Games and Culture</i> academic journal.
Spring 2025	Apocalypse Resort Research Assistant; User Experience Designer Research Creation Project <i>DigiPen Institute of Technology</i> - Collaborated with Professor Christopher Hawk to design a video game for use in psychology experiments examining prosocial and aggressive behavioral outcomes. - Conducted research on 20+ commercial video games. - Authored and edited effective design documentation to facilitate communication among interdisciplinary team members.
Spring 2024 - Spring 2025	Shadow's Grove Creative Director; Narrative Designer 3D Narrative Adventure Game; Published on Steam <i>DigiPen Institute of Technology</i> - Led a team of 27 designers, artists, programmers, and musicians, hosting regular meetings across departments to communicate ideas, solicit feedback, and uphold cohesion. - Wrote game design documents, scripted 50+ dialogue lines, hosted 30+ playtests, created 2 cinematics, and edited trailers.

Fall 2024 - Spring 2025	- Conducted cultural research, providing inspiration and references for narrative, character design, and architecture. Public Scholarship Content Creation
	Researcher <i>YouTube</i> - Researched, scripted, recorded, and edited 3 rigorous media studies video essays examining representations of neurodivergent-coded digital media characters. - Integrated 30+ academic publications and books across disability studies, media studies, and psychology. - Achieved donations, an 11% like rate, and 100+ comments per video.
Fall 2022 - Fall 2023	Strike Back User Interface Designer; Technical Designer; Associate Producer 2D Fighting Game; Published on Steam <i>DigiPen Institute of Technology</i> - Designed game user interface, including 7 menus and a heads-up display in Figma. - Created documentation detailing inspirations, references, and design intent. - Implemented user interface into a playable prototype in Unity using C# coding. - Conducted 30+ playtests and analyzed findings.

EMPLOYMENT (non-academic)

Fall 2025 - Winter 2025	Lead Instructor
	<i>Snapology</i> - Instructed groups of up to 20 students on STEM concepts.
Fall 2025 - Winter 2025	Learning Facilitator
	<i>Steamoji</i> - Guided and encouraged students tackling complex STEAM projects across digital arts, physical computing, fabrication, engineering, and robotics. - Hosted 30+ orientation trials to recruit new students.
Fall 2023 - Spring 2023	Web Designer; User Researcher
	<i>Global Callcenter Solutions</i> - Conducted research on 50+ competitors and synthesized findings to design a more modern-facing company website. - Created and implemented introductory videos and animations in Adobe After Effects.